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A quilting apparatus and method for guiding a sewing machine relative to at least one layer of fabric is disclosed. The apparatus may include an adjustable quilting frame and a carriage assembly that supports the sewing machine. The quilting frame is mounted relative to a working surface and retains one or more fabric layers in a substantially planar orientation. The carriage assembly includes lower and upper carriage components that cooperate to transport the sewing machine in lateral and longitudinal directions with respect to the quilting frame. The quilting frame includes support members acting as spools to retain the fabric layers and having locking mechanisms for maintaining tension in the fabric layers. The support members have an adjustable length to accommodate various fabric sizes and to accommodate the arbitrary dimensions of the working surface. The height of the quilting frame may also be adjusted by a height adjustment assembly.

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